

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fault Prophecy?

Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

Matthew 9:17

Before proceeding we need to step back and retrace our steps in order to see how we have gotten to this point. In so doing we will be better able both to assess the present situation and also get a better sense of what might lie ahead. What follows is a brief summary of what we have determined so far:

1) From its beginning "catholic", or what I have called traditional/orthodox Christianity, has been built upon the assumption that the Bible is the very Word of God and is utterly truthful in what it teaches. The whole belief-structure of Christianity rises out of this fundamental conviction. It has guided doctrinal understanding and debate for two thousand years.

2) Up until recently, the Anglican Church, as part of the one, catholic, and apostolic church, has both explicitly and implicitly agreed with this view of Scripture.

3) In the late 19th century liberalism was introduced into the life of the Church. Starting from a rejection of the traditional view of the Bible, it sought to adapt the teaching of the Church to the new theories of science and culture.

4) The basic principles of liberalism are inclusiveness, universalism and the authority of experience. These, along with liberalism's ever-changing faces, have proven to be incompatible

with the traditional/orthodox faith upon which the Church was founded. It is, in fact, another religion altogether. As a result, there are two religions competing for attention in the same Church.

5) As well as being divided at its heart, and partly *because* of that, the denomination is in serious decline and faces crises on many fronts.

6) Many of the problems in the Church, especially the decline in membership relative to non-liberal churches, are either the direct result of liberalism or have been worsened by its influence.

7) The unacknowledged clash between the two religions is the major factor in the gridlock that afflicts the denomination.

8) Both sides have found themselves backed into opposite corners over the issue of homosexual practice/marriage. Each side rightly sees its fundamental principles at stake and is unprepared to back away from its position.

9) The division over homosexuality is just the presenting symptom while the underlying cause is the clash between the two religions.

10) The same fundamental division is threatening the future of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

And now to the task at hand. In geology, a fault is defined as a fracturing in the earth's crust caused by massive forces at work beneath the surface. One of these is the San Andreas Fault which runs roughly north and south through much of California. By studying such geological phenomena and the history of past earthquake activity in a particular area, scientists try to predict the timing of an earthquake and the pattern of destruction that would follow. The famous

Richter Scale was developed to measure the intensity of these upheavals and the tremors which sometimes precede them.

Similarly, it is possible to trace the fault lines already present in the Anglican Church of Canada in order to predict what might happen if an "earthquake" were to hit. When we combine this with a consideration of the tremors that have already been felt we too can map out the future based on a kind of ecclesiastical Richter Scale. This chapter will suggest how the "fault lines" of unstable conditions that already exist just beneath the surface in the Church will likely play themselves out in such an event.

As any geologist will admit, however, it is impossible to predict the exact path of devastation because of the complexity of nature. Similarly, it must not be assumed that what follows here is offered with a high degree of precision. Prophecy in the absence of divine inspiration is always a risky business! In spite of this, it is possible to predict the general pattern of destruction. If you have discovered a major fault and if it lies in a region subject to earthquake activity, then you know roughly what is going to happen in the actual event. You would do your best to alert the population to the danger in the hope that they would make the appropriate preparations. You might even write a book about it!

It will come as no surprise that this writer is convinced (and has tried to convince his readers) that the Anglican Church of Canada is, in fact, sitting on top of a major fault line running between its two incompatible religions. As yet there has been no triggering earthquake but there have been a lot of tremors creating serious concern as this book has tried to demonstrate.

At this point in time it is not difficult to predict when the big one will hit. Many, including this author, are convinced that it will take place after the second and final vote on the changes to the Marriage Canon that will take place at General Synod next July (GS 2019) in Vancouver. Multiple signs are pointing to this as the event that will trigger others to follow. It will send out shockwaves that have the potential of doing serious damage.

It is now time to predict how GS 2019 will affect the Church by extending the fault lines and tensions we have already discovered. At the very least the underlying liberal/conservative division of the Church will be forced closer to the surface, making it more visible for all who are willing to look into the ugly abyss. Gird yourselves. This is not for the faint of heart.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to consider a couple of other contextual realities that will enter into our assessment of what will happen. Both will make it even more difficult for the two religions to come to a common mind or even work together. But they may also help provide a willingness to consider the radical changes that might save us.

It is important to realize that adherents of both religions, liberal and conservative alike, are feeling restricted by current realities and yearn for a Church in which they can function with greater effectiveness for the Kingdom (as each envisions it). They might well re-imagine an ACC in which:

- the constant internecine conflict experienced at all levels of its structures and institutions would be significantly reduced, if not eliminated altogether.
- each side was able to “do its own thing” in its own way and get on with its mission as it understands it.
- each parish would have a bishop who shared its basic theological perspective and was fully supportive of its worship, mission and ethos.
- parishes were able enthusiastically to co-operate with other local parishes in mission and service.
- parishes could give enthusiastically to their dioceses and not see such payments merely as the “price of admission” to a fruitless conversation.
- clergy meetings would share a common focus and be mutually supportive of one another’s ministries, unencumbered by mixed agendas and misunderstandings. And with no elephants in the room.

- Synods could deal with issues from a more common perspective and be more supportive of local initiatives and programs.
- parishes feel less alienated or distant from their dioceses, more enthusiastic participants in synodical structures.
- common programs for worship, mission, evangelism, education and service could be developed.

The power of these re-imaginings must not be underestimated in a Church fast approaching dysfunction. Each side considers itself to be doing God's work and this provides a strong motivation to try to get on with the task as unhindered as possible.

It must also be kept in mind that both sides have reason to consider themselves the legitimate successor to the founders of the ACC. The liberal side has been a vital part of its structures and for generations. It would be fair to say that it is now by far the dominant religion of the two, with its hands on most of the levers of power, its adherents in most positions of authority. It could be called the *institutional* successor. The conservative side, also a (lesser) participant in the structures and institutions of the ACC for generations, represents the founding religion and could be called the *theological/spiritual* successor.

I believe that both sides are, for various reasons, willing to see the legitimacy of the other's claim to succession, even though at present preoccupied with establishing their own position. Each is fundamentally uneasy with an outright denial of the other's claim. And besides, they share a long history of collegiality and of belonging to the same institution.

Keeping these considerations in mind we can now explore the likely outcomes of GS 2019.

The eventual net effect of GS 2019 will be to confirm the central thesis of this book that the ACC is indeed deeply divided by its two religions.

The motion to amend the Marriage Canon will be approved, rejected or tabled. In what follows I will argue that whatever happens, the ACC will go through significant trauma and be forever changed, but in different ways depending on the way the vote actually goes. As I see it, there are only three foreseeable longer-term outcomes, one leading fairly quietly but sadly to a solidly liberal Church, one leading to chaos and gridlock that will take years to reach some kind of indeterminate resolution, if it ever does reach resolution, or one that will channel that chaos and gridlock fairly quickly into the structural changes necessary to accommodate the realities of the Church in the 21st century. The first will come about if the motion succeeds. If it fails, then either the second or third will take place. What follows are my reasons for suggesting these outcomes.

- a) THE FUTURE MOST LIKELY: The motion to amend the Marriage Canon passes the second vote, inspiring further alienation from the worldwide Anglican Communion, and causing a significant proportion of remaining conservatives to leave the ACC.

The Anglican Communion

As we have noted the Episcopal Church in the US has already been put under sanctions by the Communion for taking the same action now taken by the ACC. The latter will now no doubt be subject to the same sanctions, with the expectation that more serious action, perhaps even expulsion from the Communion, would be taken if this action is not reversed. While the possibility of such a development would not likely have much of a deterrent effect on the Canadian vote in the first place, it would, if it becomes a reality, remove another reason for staying in the ACC for some. Indeed, it would be seen by many as putting the ACC into the position of being truly and publicly a schismatic Church. After all, the first principle of the Solemn Declaration of 1893, the founding document of the ACC, states that it desires to be in full communion with the Anglican Communion and through it to the church catholic. If the Communion rejects the ACC, then it becomes a serious question as to how it could claim to be part of the church catholic. Not to mention that it could be argued that by approving the amended Marriage Canon, GS would be in

the awkward position of having contradicted its founding document's basic commitment to walk together.

Individual Anglicans

The impact on individual conservative/orthodox members of the ACC will also be significant. It is one thing to be an orthodox believer in a Church that is at least officially orthodox. It is quite another to be one in a Church that has *officially* abandoned that orthodoxy and will likely abandon it further. There is no longer any smokescreen to hide behind, no longer any Creed to point to, nor, most importantly, any Bible to which to appeal. And for all the reasons discussed in Chapter Five many of them will leave. They will know full well and without a doubt that the whole doctrinal structure of the ACC, as it is presently constituted, has no real foundation.

A number of conservative clergy who are ministering in "typical" Anglican parishes will go because they identify with the following sentiments expressed by one of their number who departed the ACC in response to GS 2016. Here is only part of what the Rev. John Oakes had to say:¹

In what amounts to an exit memo like this, it is tempting to focus solely on the negative. But it is important to be clear that for most of my ministerial career, I enjoyed good relations with people of many different theological positions. I still do. I also remain grateful for what I learned in the ACC, for the different parishes where I ministered, and for the many opportunities I had to serve and to reach out with the good news of the gospel.

But after General Synod—and especially after some bishops effectively negated a national decision-making process by making "interim," pastoral arrangements for same-sex marriage before it had been fully approved—the trust I once had in the church's local and

¹ The reader is encouraged to read the full article at <http://livingwordlive.com/36-2/why-i-left/>

national leaders was severely weakened. And I came to the conclusion that I could no longer continue to serve in the ACC either to the best of my abilities or in good faith.

Related to this loss of trust was a parallel sense of losing voice. As incumbent of a diverse parish of differing viewpoints, where strong advocacy on either side of the same-sex marriage debate would have been highly divisive, I refrained from expressing my position from the pulpit for pastoral reasons, even though it was quite well known. So, I understand, have other clergy, even in parishes otherwise recognized as evangelical. By taking the first of two steps towards officially authorizing marriage for same-sex couples in the ACC, General Synod aggravated the challenge for traditionalist clergy wishing to address such issues. And by jumping the gun in making pastoral provisions for it, bishops only made matters worse.

In making this last point, I am aware of its obvious weaknesses. No-one is called into gospel ministry to tell people what they want to hear or to avoid controversial issues because they may upset or divide. Jesus's own example clearly indicates otherwise. But when one reaches a point, as I did, where one feels inhibited, for strong pastoral reasons, from speaking the gospel truth as one understands it, it becomes impossible to minister with full integrity.

There are hundreds of conservative clergy in both liberal and conservative dioceses who would sympathize with these statements, having felt that the current state of affairs in the ACC forces them to make compromises that seriously curtail the effectiveness of their ministry. That is because there are very few parishes that are solidly conservative. Almost every parish is divided on the question of same-sex marriage, but not all are divided in the same way. Conservative clergy have found that working in a "typical" parish was what they were called to do as preachers of the Gospel but are finding that the current state of this division imposes impossible limitations on what they can say or do. And so they, too, will be sorely tempted to leave for a less restrictive

environment. This temptation will only intensify once same-sex marriage becomes the doctrine of the ACC.

Whatever their exact reasons for this moment being the line in the sand for many individual parishioners and clergy, the truth is that, after GS 2016, they are already beginning to move. So many have contacted The Right Rev. Charlie Masters, the Bishop of Anglican Network in Canada, that he has actually written a general letter:

... in response to a growing number of calls and requests that have come from Anglican believers, both clergy and laity, who find themselves very distressed as they ponder the most recent developments in the Anglican Church of Canada at its General Synod last July and since.

We have actually never experienced this number of inquiries. Some have come directly to our Diocesan office but many have been made to the local ANiC clergy in their respective communities. Either way, the distress is real and the concern about what these developments may mean for orthodox Anglicans in the future seems to be growing...
Beyond praying, we are willing and eager to stand with you in any way we can.

In other words, this is showing all too many signs of being the big one for many individual Anglicans!

Anglican Parishes

This is also true for those *parishes* that are more or less solidly conservative. Over recent years about 20 whole (or almost whole) parishes have already left the denomination behind, most (all?) of them joining ANiC. And they have tended to be lively and growing congregations. In fact, one of them, St. John's, Shaughnessy, in Vancouver, with an average Sunday attendance of 750 and a Sunday School of 160, was the largest ACC congregation in Canada! Those who departed left

behind a massive church structure with a skeletal congregation. When it went, St. John's took the world-renowned evangelical Anglican scholar, J.I. Packer, with it. Another sad loss.

Leaving is always a difficult and very painful process. It has torn apart local bodies of Christ, for one thing, and this should not be glossed over in any consideration of the phenomenon. Although this may be a so-called hidden cost, it is all too real. There is also the pain of all the divisions which lead up to the actual decision to leave. Relatives and friends become alienated and estranged, vestries and committees become battle grounds, clergy are torn in their pastoral duties, annual meetings are a nightmare.

When a large proportion of a parish leaves, the "stayers" are left behind to try to keep the parish running with less than half of the people and income they had before. This is a very hard road and often leads to closure and sale of the property, given the difficulty to survive that even non-divided parishes are facing.

As well as the loss of their relationships with fellow parishioners, those who leave as a group almost always suffer the loss of their buildings as well. In the Anglican system the local ACC bishop is their technical owner and at the end of the day he retains them in most of these situations. This is in spite of the fact that neither he nor the diocese has ever paid a cent toward the purchase or maintenance of these churches and halls (although in some cases dioceses have provided low-cost loans and other support for such). However, the leavers have helped bear the financial burdens for years, and who can blame them if they are sometimes extremely upset when they discover they have no ownership rights at all. It is their church, they have paid (at least) for its upkeep, they are (often) its officers and members of vestry and yet they are forced to leave it all behind. It seems contrary to the principles of natural justice that they get nothing. Nevertheless, that has not stopped a number of parishes from leaving and others will follow them after the amendment passes its second vote.

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Given the high spiritual and emotional cost of parishes leaving, why do they do it? It is no doubt partly because these parishes have a high percentage of Anglicans who fit into the “individual” category already discussed above. A critical mass of such persons in a single parish would no doubt be enough to do it. However, there are also some reasons for leaving that are due to the unique vexations of being a conservative parish in a liberal diocese and denomination.

In order to get a sense of this, I will include some remarks taken from published accounts by the Rev. John Cox, rector of St. Alban's, Port Alberni on Vancouver Island in 1996.

What seems to have triggered their decision to leave is a combination of intense frustration with the official structures of the Church and considerations unique to that particular parish. The details are sketchy in reference to the latter and, in any event, they would be both inappropriate and irrelevant to our discussion here. Here is how Mr. Cox has expressed the former in reference to his own congregation:

On the parish level we...have felt unsupported in our ministry and have been in the awkward position of having to explain statements by leaders that appear to many as being inconsistent with the Christian Gospel... It is not, and should not be our function to hold the leadership accountable to uphold traditional Christian values and teaching - indeed it should be the other way round!...(i.e., *it is the leadership which should be defending the faith on behalf of the faithful-my comment*)

The current direction of the Anglican Church has not encouraged or enriched local ministry and in fact has been a major factor draining energy and attention away from what we believe Jesus would have us focus on....

We believe that we have genuinely attempted to make a meaningful contribution to the life and ministry of the Anglican Church and we have repeatedly voiced concerns about (various] issues ... We have done so at deanery level, diocesan conferences, synods, and in

personal conversations. We have been told that we have been heard but it feels more like a grudging toleration....

We are choosing to be pro-active in our identity as a church rather than waiting to see what will happen at the next Synod...and the next...*The Good News is too good and the mission of the Lord Jesus too great for us to wait in limbo any longer!* (his italics)

We are convinced that our efforts should be poured into reaching out into the world to share the Gospel with those who are lost, and to share in the ministry of healing and hope with the wounded and the poor. Unfortunately, the Anglican umbrella has become more of a hindrance and a liability than an asset in the fulfillment of this vision. We have found ourselves having to make a choice between seeking to salvage a crumbling institution or going out into world in the name of Christ to serve Him as best we can according to His agenda not ours.²

It is clear that this intense feeling of frustration became an intolerable burden for this particular parish. For one thing the leadership wanted some assurances that the diocese would cease its liberal drifting so that they could in good faith ask parishioners to invest in an expanded facility. Why put more capital into a "crumbling institution"? Their requests that the diocese define the limits of Christian belief and practice naturally fell on unresponsive ears. They came to the conclusion that the way the ACC went about its business was fundamentally flawed and that further association with it was actually a serious hindrance to their efforts to proclaim and live out the Gospel! The parish simply wanted to get on with the job and not be caught up in fruitless internal debates which, in its judgement, were going to result in official departures from Biblical religion no matter what it said or did.

No wonder they left. In spite of the admittedly great cost.

² All quotes taken from a Statement by the Rev. John Cox in January 1996 entitled "Concerns Relating to the Anglican Church of Canada"

Bishops and Dioceses

A positive vote would also have ramifications for several conservative bishops and, perhaps, entire dioceses. After the first vote passed GS 2016, eight bishops, seven of them diocesans, issued a statement saying that GS had “grievously erred” in its decision and they were publicly dissenting from it. They called on the Primate “to seek ways to guarantee our place within the Anglican Church of Canada and the Anglican Communion.” This is serious stuff.

In an interview with the Anglican Journal, one of the signatories, Bishop Fraser Lawton of Athabasca, was quoted as saying that these bishops were concerned that “there may be a relearning of how we relate to one another, and that some things that were always givens may not be so now.” He went on to explain by saying “I think there will be a time of thinking deeply what the relationships are between Anglicans within Canada—bishops, dioceses, individuals—and it’s an unknown at this point what that will look like.” Again, this is serious stuff. And it does hint at the need for some sort of reconfiguration of the ACC. We will return to this subject later.

In their statement, the bishops reaffirm their commitment to the Anglican Church of Canada, as well as to the Church Catholic and the Anglican Communion. They also reaffirm their commitment to “the scriptural, traditional and catholic definition of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman as set out in both the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Alternative Services.” The obvious problem is that the latter commitment is going to be incompatible with the former (to the ACC) if the amendment passes.

The reader is reminded that *several dioceses have actually departed the Episcopal Church south of the border* (with some of their parishes declining to move with them) for these same reasons. Is there any reason (besides being Canadians!) why this could not happen here? When we have eight of our bishops saying such things in public you know that something unprecedented is taking place and that we need to pay close attention. This tremor should be strong enough for all of us to check the foundations.

If, in fact, one or more dioceses act to disassociate themselves from the ACC, one can rest assured that this will trigger a response from the worldwide Anglican Communion in one form or the other. This will no doubt follow the path already blazed in regard to the American dioceses that have already departed the Episcopal Church. That is, many Provinces of the Communion will agitate for the inclusion of the departed dioceses within the Communion and the process of excluding the ACC already underway will gain further momentum. If the Communion ends up barring the ACC, it will more easily be perceived as schismatic.

Sympathetic conservative Canadian bishops and dioceses will also be put in a difficult position if a fellow conservative diocese leaves the ACC. It will be hard for them to simply stand and watch as their fellow conservative Anglicans come under intense legal attack from the ACC, as they have in the U.S. This will be even more urgent if a leaving diocese is unable to support itself financially and needs help to continue its mission or even survive. At this point in time it is impossible to tell what such a scenario would look like, except that it would not be pretty.

The Indigenous Church

Yet another complication we face is the place of our indigenous Anglican sisters and brothers in all this, whichever way the vote goes. The Church has been trying hard to accommodate itself to these members of its community and is in the process of working with them toward providing a self-determining Indigenous church within our structures. From all accounts our indigenous peoples are more conservative on the question of same-sex marriage. As such, they may consider a positive vote as yet another alien cultural notion threatening their way of life.

These Anglicans form a large constituent of several dioceses and also have their own bishops over the Territory of the People and the diocese of The Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh. In addition, they have a National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and several decision-making bodies. What their overall reaction to these developments would be is anybody's guess, but indigenous Anglicans must be taken into account and be part of the process.

Addressing Conservative Concerns?

These various leavings will happen in spite of the likelihood that General Synod will make some kind of attempt to address conservative concerns. However, it is difficult to imagine any action that will effectively prevent the described scenarios from unfolding in some form or other. It is like trying to square the circle. But these remarks by Primate Fred Hiltz express the hope that it can be done:

I would say there's...a deep yearning within the House (of Bishops) that...we get to General Synod with maybe some kind of amendment to the amendment that actually speaks to the reality that there are a variety of views of marriage in our church—an amendment that could possibly get worded...to reflect the fact that people of a conservative view of marriage would feel absolutely free to continue to aspire to that view—teach it, uphold it and practice it. And that liberals would understand that,” he said. “And then on the other side of the coin, that liberals would have the blessing of the church to proceed with same-gender marriages with an assurance that people of a conservative view understand that and respect it. And that neither is imposing their view on the other...”³

This would be all be very nice but as the Jake Worley affair and the general animosity stirred up by the two religions each trying to do its own thing have already demonstrated, “nice” is a bit of a stretch. And if we look south of the border to Bishop Bill Love and the imposition of their new Marriage Canon on all dioceses, it may be impossible.⁴

It is nevertheless incumbent upon us to explore a couple of possible ways in which the attempt might be made.

- 1) A good conscience clause

³ Tali Folkins and Joelle Kidd, *Anglican Journal*, November 13, 2018

⁴ See below, p. 159-60

Some will hope that a “conscience clause” will enable conservatives to live with the decision of General Synod. The provision of a conscience clause was a key element in getting General Synod's approval of the ordination of women back in the day. It recognized the right of persons to disassociate themselves from the ministry of ordained women while at the same time committing them not to obstruct such ministry. Those clergy who objected to the ordination of women were permitted to continue in their ministries protected by the conscience clause.

Even if a conscience clause could be constructed to allow for non-conformity on the question of same-sex marriage (and right now it is hard to imagine one that could, given the tensions already present), it would put the ACC in the slightly ridiculous position of having two “valid” but contradictory doctrines of marriage (as the Primate’s remarks above suggest). This would be inherently unstable.

Besides, the actual history of the conscience clause has an ominous message for those who hope it will protect their place in the ACC. In the case of women’s ordination, General Synod eventually removed the clause, effectively making only one view possible in any public sense. It is now understood that the Church will only ordain those who accept the ordination of women.

Given this history it is extremely unlikely that those who are opposed to same-sex marriage would ever believe that a conscience clause, however worded, would guarantee their place in the ACC. It would be clearly seen as at best a temporary resting place that would eventually have only one outcome: the eventual elimination of all opposition to the position adopted by the General Synod. It is not an acceptable long-term solution.

2) Vowing to change

One particular area of angst is over how conservative candidates for ordination could vow “to conform to the Doctrine and Discipline of the ACC” (BAS p.635 [Bishop], p.645 [Priest], p.654 [Deacon]) once that Doctrine includes the new Marriage Canon. As we have noted, liberals have, from the traditional/orthodox perspective, at least, been fudging on their vows for generations,

but conservatives, being more literal minded, would simply not be able to commit themselves to “conform” to same-sex marriage.

The cleanest and most radical solution would be to eliminate this vow altogether. But how could a Church then have any basis on which to ordain someone other than his or her psychological integrity as a human being? Almost any belief would then be acceptable, and any sense of doctrinal discipline would be non-existent.

Another possible solution would be for the ACC finally to come to terms with the fact that its demand for conformity to its Doctrine is almost meaningless. That is, its Doctrine remains so undefined that it is just not possible to imagine what “conformity” to it might mean. Although the website of the denomination refers to the ecumenical Creeds and the Thirty-Nine Articles as among “Our Beliefs”, it is commonly understood by its leaders that these are merely the historic positions of the Church which can nowadays be interpreted in a variety of ways. Generations of theological students have been taught to take them this way and therefore they are able with good and sincere consciences to vow to conform to these authorities, knowing that they are not required to take them for what they plainly say⁵. This may seem odd to lay people and even deceptive, but, as we have seen⁶, it is the reality.

One could say that a logical and responsible response would be for the ACC to simply and straightforwardly define the Doctrine to which it demands conformity from all of its clergy. As “logical and responsible” as such an approach might be, it is also virtually impossible! It would be totally rejected by an establishment that knows full well that at its heart, liberalism cannot define what it believes because it is so varied and constantly changing. For this reason alone, we will never see “the Doctrine of the Anglican Church of Canada” as an authoritative standard officially and straightforwardly put in writing.

⁵ I personally witnessed this at work when the bishop who ordained me told one of my fellow ordinands “not to worry about it” when he had expressed his angst over taking these vows while not fully accepting “official” doctrine.

⁶ See p. 68

The Church also knows that its principle of inclusion makes very problematic any attempt to draw a circle around what is and what is not acceptable for an Anglican clergyperson to believe. Again, I refer to Archbishop Peers' remarks when, in reference to Essentials 94, he said that he wanted "...to discourage a tendency to suggest that one group is right and another not, a tendency that moves into issues of power and talk about winners and losers rather than about brothers and sisters."⁷ I also refer again to the Rev. Cox's futile efforts to have his diocese address the limits of doctrinal positions.⁸

A great part of the complexity here is the fact that liberals and conservatives actually think in different ways and this makes real communication (and relationship) very difficult. Liberals honestly do not comprehend how seriously those in the traditional/orthodox camp take departures from our official positions. Having a different understanding of the function of symbol and language, liberals really feel that they are not making any real departures at all. In their view, they are simply articulating the faith in ways appropriate to their culture like Christians have always done. For liberals it is merely a matter of formulating a contemporary expression of the "unchanging faith" that exists beneath the surface.

Traditional/orthodox people, on the other hand, find it impossible to make a distinction between the faith and its original authorized articulation in the Scriptures. This is not to deny that the Gospel is to adapt itself to various cultures. But its basic shape and fundamental truths dare not be changed. There is no inarticulate "unchanging faith" which can somehow be separated from its expression. They see this idea as a modern construct which has no warrant in Scripture or tradition.

Given these realities, there does remain one possibility of dealing with an impasse over ordination vows, not by defining Doctrine, but by defining or changing the phrase "conform to".

⁷ General Synod 1995 Report, p. 2

⁸ Above, p. 150

This would have to be done explicitly and in writing by General Synod. If it were to read “generally conform to”, for example, it might be acceptable to both liberals and conservatives. It would allow liberals the room to continue to do what they are already doing and for conservatives to have an assurance they could take the vows, while disagreeing with a particular newly-minted doctrine. However, it would clearly be difficult to hold anyone accountable to such a vow and this alone would make its adoption by General Synod very unlikely, if not meaningless as well.

On the other hand, as things stand, the fact that the Church currently demands that its candidates for ordination at all levels make a virtually meaningless vow surely brings disrepute on the institution. It makes hypocrites of us all. Maybe honesty is the best policy and we need to do away with the vow altogether, after all. At least it wouldn't be a bad place for a *church* to start! But don't count on it.

In conclusion, there does not appear to be any way to make a truly “safe space” for the conservative wing of the ACC if the amendment passes. This will result in an ACC that is fully in the grip of the liberal religion as the conservative drag on its agendas and programs, such as it is, will be reduced to the point of irrelevance. In other words, the re-imaginings above would approach reality, but only for those on the liberal side. For conservatives, the possibilities of such visions and dreams would be lost, perhaps forever, as they would find themselves utterly without significant influence in the ACC and frustrated at every turn by an unsympathetic and misunderstanding establishment.

Those conservatives who decide to remain anyway will make their peace, such as they can, with living in a liberal church with minimal political power and collegial support. They will know that the battle for the soul of the ACC has been lost, at least for the foreseeable future and they will put their efforts into whatever Gospel endeavours they feel called to support. In the future, people will probably be as surprised to learn that a conservative remnant in the ACC still exists as they would be to learn there is still one today in the United Church of Canada.

Staying in the ACC will appeal to a certain demographic of conservative Anglicans who for a number of reasons, including an abhorrence of schism, have a high tolerance for living in what for them would be a difficult environment. Fundamentally, they will simply believe that the Lord has called them to stay and continue to fish from the ACC boat. Some will no doubt see this call as The Way of the Cross, as a call to die in the hope of the resurrection, when God brings the ACC back to himself in his time and in his way. Powerless in death, they nevertheless will endeavor to remain faithful and provide a Gospel witness in the meantime. Some will have the conviction that the liberal Church will collapse under its own weight into complete dysfunction, come to its senses, and re-establish its foundations in a new Reformation. They will hope to be there as midwives to assist in the rebirth.

As for conservative laypeople remaining in liberal or middle of the road parishes, theirs will be a lonely and often unrewarding life, but one that will enjoy occasional influence at the local level. Some will leave such parishes for other denominations or, if they have the option of a local conservative ACC parish, they could attend there. As for the latter, they will soldier on with their understanding of mission and evangelism, preaching the Gospel and supporting non-ACC mission organizations as they have traditionally done. If the past is any sign of the future, such parishes may even flourish and grow.

Their rectors will be under increasing pressure to conform to National Church priorities and doctrinal changes, especially as any conscience clause protecting them (if they have one) wears thin. Conservative bishops and dioceses will, at least for a time, continue to have a voice at the table but the rest of the Church won't really be even politely listening anymore. They will naturally be moving on to the Church as they re-imagine it.

Speaking of conservative bishops and dioceses, a glance south of the border reveals what their likely fate will be. There the situation is, as usual, further down the road than in Canada, and a bit different in the details. Those conservative bishops and dioceses still remaining in the Episcopal Church are now on notice that every diocese must allow for same-sex marriages

regardless of the position of its bishop. Priests wishing to conduct such a ceremony must only get the approval of another bishop and in so-doing come under his or her jurisdiction at least for the purposes of the service itself. It seems that only Bishop William Love of Albany is prepared to say that no such marriages will be permitted anywhere in his diocese, period.⁹

- b) THE FUTURE LESS LIKELY: The motion to amend the Marriage Canon does not pass the second vote or is tabled. The impatient liberal portion of the ACC then decides to ignore the fact that the present Canon remains in force, resulting in significant ecclesiastical dysfunction.

If the vote is negative or tabled, a number of liberal dioceses will go ahead with same-sex marriages anyway. Indeed, some are already doing so on the very questionable presumption that the present Marriage Canon does not actually prohibit same-sex marriage. No action has been taken against these dioceses, presumably in the hope that GS will pass the amendment and make any disciplinary proceedings moot.

Their action in the face of a negative vote at GS will no doubt set off a chain-reaction of liberal canonical disobedience from parishes in non-rebellious dioceses who will themselves, against their own bishops, proceed to marry same-sex couples. They will no doubt seek episcopal oversight from those bishops who transgress General Synod. In this they will be following the precedent set in the Episcopal Church where their General Convention has, as we have just seen above, authorized such incursions into the territory of conservative bishops with or without the permission of those bishops.

⁹ I refer the reader to the courageous and articulate Pastoral Letter of the Rt. Rev. William Love of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany. Based on his traditional understanding of exclusive geographical episcopal jurisdiction, it can be found at <https://albanyepiscopaldiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Pastoral-Letter-Regarding-B012-Nov2018.pdf> Not only does Bishop Love give an excellent summary of the biblical evidence regarding homosexuality, he provides this link to a more detailed and scholarly presentation: <https://albanyepiscopaldiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Homosexuality-The-Bible-and-the-Anglican-Crisis-Bp-LeMarquand.pdf>

Oddly, this will put conservatives in the unusual position of being, in a sense, those who “stay” and while liberals will be in the equally unusual position of being those who “go”. They will probably not go by means of an official break with the ACC, but rather by ignoring the authority of General Synod and daring it to do something about it. Such open and brazen rejection of the authority of General Synod would throw the denomination into an unprecedented constitutional crisis.

At this point it is impossible to predict or even imagine what the final outcome of this possibility might be. One important factor is that the national establishment of the ACC would be in general sympathy with the bishops and priests who decided to ignore General Synod. As those duty bound to support General Synod and Canon Law, those in authority would find themselves in a very awkward position, to say the least. In the past they have managed to turn a blind eye to bishops and dioceses that were pushing at the boundaries, but with this development, blindness would surely not be an option. All we can say with any assurance is that it will be ugly, not to mention debilitating for the ACC. If ignored too long, it could even lead to its collapse due to its internal self-contradictions. One thing is sure: something will have to give.

The basic units of the Anglican structure, we are told, are the dioceses while the National Church exists at their pleasure. The outlaw dioceses could just go their own way or join together in some way in a temporary unofficial alliance. Or they could themselves do nothing, proceed as they wish with same-sex marriage and see what happens. The conservatives in these dioceses would find themselves alienated from their bishops, resulting in action similar to those we describe in part a) above. On the other hand, liberals in dioceses that did not go outlaw would feel left behind and agitate to do something about that.

It is also likely that the Anglican Communion would weigh in on the subject. Certainly, parts of it (e.g., GAFCON) would react very negatively regarding the outlaw dioceses. Unless the National Church did something to disassociate itself from them (unlikely!), it would no doubt at least come under the same sort of sanctions applied to the Episcopal Church. It is unclear what the

Communion will do when the Americans and Canadians refuse to backtrack, but the ultimate sanction is to deny them membership in the Communion while admitting ACNA as a full Province.

In other words, all in all, it will be a mess.

- c) THE FUTURE LEAST LIKELY: The ecclesiastical dysfunction initiated in the above scenario is sufficient to overcome inertia and motivate truly radical structural changes that allow the Church to forge new and more natural groupings of parishes and dioceses.

This “Future” arises out of the realities of the current situation that I have been striving to put before the reader throughout this book. Whatever future belongs to the Anglican Church of Canada will necessarily be profoundly shaped by these facts. There is no way to escape them. To ignore them is to only put the Church in even greater peril. I assemble them here preliminary to suggesting a way forward that, instead, tries to take them fully into account.

SIX APPEAL

1. The Anglican Church of Canada contains two different and incompatible religions, each of which sees the other as in some real sense frustrating its ability to “get on with the job” as it sees it.
2. The upcoming General Synod vote on same-sex marriage and the resultant chaos and paralysis in the denomination will make this division and its nature much more obvious.
3. Neither liberals nor conservatives are going to change their beliefs based on a vote at General Synod. Beliefs are arrived at by other processes altogether.
4. No organization can long survive without a common vision of its fundamental beliefs and mission.

5. The only way to organize a church or any other institution in the first place is to start with bringing together those who see the need for it and share a common vision about how its goals can be met.

To these realities I now add one more that is critical to any possibility of solving the crisis that is facing the ACC:

6. **The present structures of the Church were designed in another era for another kind of Church, one that had a common vision of its fundamental beliefs and mission. These structures must be changed to accommodate the new reality of a fundamentally divided Church.**

By this last point I do not refer to the more superficial structures of the ACC, but rather to its basic shape. The hard truth is that whichever way the vote goes in Vancouver, the Anglican Church of Canada is going to be in for a rough time of it.

However, if the amendment fails, the resultant chaos and dysfunction described in Section b) may provide enough motivation to make the radical structural changes that might keep the denomination together. I use “radical” both in the sense that they go to the root of the problem and that they constitute something very different from what we have at present.

The particular structural component of the Church that is at the heart of our difficulties is that of geographical episcopal jurisdiction. This is the idea that a bishop has exclusive ecclesiastical jurisdiction in a geographical area of the ACC (such as Toronto or Northern Saskatchewan) and no other bishop or clergyperson from another jurisdiction, not even the Primate, can function in that territory without the permission of the diocesan bishop.

The problem is not so much that a bishop has exclusive authority per se, but that it is geographical in nature. The issue we face is that we are a Church that is divided more fundamentally by what

we believe than by where we live. At one time it made perfect sense to have one bishop over one area because all the Anglican churches in that area shared a common belief system. This is no longer the case. We still have one bishop but he or she oversees churches made up of people following two conflicting religions. The fault line between the religions runs down the aisle of every parish church, though it runs its jagged course uniquely in every case.

When we come to an issue on which the two religions are adamantly opposed and see as critical to their understanding of the faith, such as we have now with same-sex marriage, the fact that they are all under the one bishop becomes a serious problem. The bishop has to go one way or the other. If she chooses to accept or allow same-sex marriage, she knows she will severely alienate a portion of her flock, and the same will be true if she rejects the new doctrine. Of course, this same dilemma faces every rector in the country because parishes have traditionally been organized strictly along geographical lines as well¹⁰.

Admittedly, this “territorial imperative” is the final frontier for many bishops in the sense that they seem to see strictly enforcing this law as the only way to keep the church together. Indeed, it has been weaponized recently in a case that will illustrate the lengths to which some of them will go to protect the idea of territorial authority for themselves and for the Church generally.

I refer here to the case of the Rev. Jacob Worley. In April, 2017, Mr. Worley was elected bishop of Caledonia in northern British Columbia. Before he was elected, Mr. Worley discussed with his Archbishop the fact that, while under the authority of the Province of Rwanda, he had founded a mission within the boundaries of an Episcopal diocese in the U.S. and he had done so without the approval of the local Episcopal bishop. This was clearly against the Anglican tradition of the territorial imperative and Canon Law. At first, he was assured by his Archbishop that because he

¹⁰ While traditional parish boundaries are technically still in place, in the ways that matter most they are almost meaningless in the modern era. Most city parishes are composed of many people who cross several parish boundaries to get to the church of their choice. They are attracted by family ties, worship styles, theological positions, sense of community, and even quality of preaching, among other things.

was currently a priest in good standing in Caledonia this episode in his career would not be a hindrance to his being elected bishop. He subsequently was, in fact, elected as the new bishop.

His election, as is normal, had to be approved by the Provincial House of Bishops but they, instead of giving the usually routine go-ahead, in an unprecedented action refused to do so. Mr. Worley was soon after dismissed “without cause”¹¹ from his parish in Caledonia, forcing him and his family to return in difficult circumstances to the United States. The Primate has stated that all this was done “in the best interests of the Church” although he did not explain why he thought so.

And why was such drastic action taken? It was not only because Mr. Worley had crossed jurisdictional lines in his previous ministry, it was stated explicitly that it was done because he continued to believe that doing so was not fundamentally wrong. In other words, he held an opinion that was contrary to Canon Law. Even though he gave assurances to the House of Bishops that he would obey that Canon Law, this was not good enough for his inquisitors. They insisted that he could not even hold an opinion that was contrary to this Canon Law. And they did not have to answer to anyone for their action and Mr. Worley had no right to appeal.

In other words, Mr. Worley was guilty of a “thought crime” that the bishops judged so terrible that he could not serve as a bishop in the ACC. This is in spite of the fact that most of those same bishops themselves hold opinions that are contrary to current Canon Law! As does probably every clergyperson when you get right down to it, if you take Canon Law literally.

But this Canon Law is about jurisdiction. That is my point here. Why did the House of Bishops go to such a self-contradictory extreme? It was not simply because Mr. Worley is a conservative evangelical. After all, they approved as his successor a man who appears to be in that same camp. No, it was obviously something that they felt they had to do in order to preserve the very

¹¹ This usually means that the dismissal is not based on performance of duties but because the employer is no longer in need of the employee's service.

existence of the Church. From this perspective, their unprecedented and surely unjust action only makes sense. It would not do to have a sitting bishop harbouring the idea that it was, even in theory, all right to cross jurisdictional lines without the permission of the local bishop. How could the unity of the church, focused upon the bishop in his territory, his diocese, be maintained if this rule was undermined?

That they did so by the exercise of raw unaccountable power only demonstrates what I have been trying to say in this book: there is no religious unity in the ACC. It cannot be held together by an appeal to, or enforcement of, a shared doctrinal core to which all the clergy must subscribe. In the absence of such, only territorial fundamentalism, enforced by sheer power can in any sense keep the ACC together. *That is, we are a unit because at some point in the past a line was drawn around us on a map that says we are a diocese and from that understanding we cannot be allowed to stray even though the original reason the line could be drawn, a common faith, no longer exists.*

This is Mr. Worley's unforgiveable sin: he refused to believe that the territorial imperative was an essential truth. This is what put him beyond the pale. It was nothing he believes or does not believe about the doctrine of the Church. That is not what got the attention of the B.C. House of Bishops. They know the territorial imperative is all that separates us from utter chaos. No wonder they did what they did! Ironically, it will only be by abandoning this "truth" that we will ever find a way out of the mess we are in.

In our present state of division, the idea of territorial imperative has become problematic, to say the least. This will undoubtedly become all the more obvious after the vote next July, whichever way it goes. The false sense of unity conveyed by the Church being organized into geographically defined units (dioceses) will become clearer to all. And those forces, already underway, which are pushing us away from this anachronism will no doubt be stronger.

It should be noted here that the concept of "flying bishops" already in place in the U.S. (and elsewhere in the case of the ordination of women) is one of those forces. It represents a perhaps

unconscious acknowledgement of the division of the Church into two religions and that the idea of the territorial imperative needs at least some adjustment. Once you allow another bishop to have oversight in your diocese you no longer have territorial integrity in the same sense you had it before. If that involves allowing or accepting another bishop overseeing what you consider an unbiblical, sinful and harmful act, territorial integrity is strained pretty close to the breaking point. Why not just admit it and let it go altogether?

It is probable that whatever happens after GS 2019 will, as usual, erupt in slow motion, but it is in everyone's interest to try to come to terms with the evident division in a more structured and rational manner. Our sickness may be unto death unless radical structural surgery is undertaken. And even then, survival as a whole institution will continue to hang in the balance.

The ACC needs to be reorganized along lines that reflect the reality of its division into two religions. In other words, each religion must be granted its own space in order to breathe freely on its own. At the same time, in order to maintain as much of the unity of the Church as possible, these spaces need to remain connected by sharing in the administration and oversight of whatever national functions and ministries they could honestly and practically support together, including the office of a Primate, the Church in the North and the Pension Plan.

It must be said that what is proposed here is not coming from one with any expertise in the political or legal machinery of the Church, but from one who thinks (imagines?) he sees the big picture and can offer only the barest sketch of what might be done in order to accommodate the difficult realities we face. Hopefully, it may help inspire a common re-imagining of the ACC by others more familiar with the nuts and bolts. The current structures are simply unable to bear up under the current load and will eventually collapse unless changed. Something must be done, and it must have "Six Appeal" in order to work.

It is possible that these conditions could be met by dividing the ACC into two non-geographical Provinces, called "Progressive" and "Conservative", for want of better terms at present. Every

parish would then have to vote on which Province to join, those in the majority retaining the parish corporation and buildings. Those in the minority could decide to stay with the parish or join another that had voted the other way. At the end of the day there could be the same number of parishes in a given area, most of which will probably remain intact. They will lose a minority to the other side but gain a few and perhaps more than a few who found themselves a minority in other parishes. No doubt most parishes will choose to be part of the Progressive province as it would represent the status quo, more or less.

As far as current dioceses are concerned, they could retain their geographical boundaries but with the canonical provision that within its "boundaries" would be a number of parishes that would belong to a non-geographical diocese of the minority Province. That is, bishops would not have exclusive authority over a geographical area, just over those parishes that were part of his or her Province within that area. It might be that another approach would simply (!) invent all new dioceses, each of which would have about the same number of member parishes.

One thing that would make all this more possible is the modern means of communication that are available, making geographical proximity much less necessary. Virtual synods anyone?

Whatever configuration of dioceses emerges from such a process, it is important that some kind of ongoing reconciliation process be part of the way in which the two Provinces relate to one another. Once they are no longer married they may even be able to learn how to live together! Over time it might be possible to work together on more and more aspects of ministry. Perhaps.

Yes, this sketch begs a million questions and although this daunting process would no doubt be messy and painful, the truth, remember, is that doing nothing will be worse and will tie up the Church in knots for years to come and may even destroy it.

Does such a vision of the ACC have even a remote possibility of realization?

I believe that, given the depth and intractability of the current crisis, that there is a small chance that, under God, it will come about. If it does, it may even show a way out of the same divisions that afflict the Church in the rest of the Communion.

It is certainly difficult to rest easy with the conclusion that no matter which way the GS vote goes, serious conflict will characterize the life of the denomination, perhaps to the level of paralysis, as resolution of the mess becomes its overwhelming focus. The losing side, whichever it is, will do as much as it can to have the decision reversed at future General Synods as soon as possible. There is no reason why such an effort would not be attempted, given the extremely close vote we have already seen in the house of clergy in 2016. If it *is* reversed, then there apparently is no canonical reason why it would not be batted back and forth for at least a generation. Of course, those in charge of setting the agenda of future GSs might have something to say about it. What a nightmare!

I trust that enough has been said to demonstrate that my own ruminations, although speculative, are not merely idle. They have in fact been based on a careful reading of the fault lines that are already present and visible to those are willing to look. Once again, I do not maintain that the details will work themselves out exactly as portrayed. No seismologist, ecclesiastical or otherwise, would make any such claim. However, the course of events, will, I believe, generally follow the pattern or patterns that I have outlined. It is difficult to see how they could not, given the realities of the situation both in the Anglican Church of Canada and in the Anglican Communion at the present time.

But the actual eruption, like all real earthquakes, will not be bound by our charts and maps, our neatly assembled facts and figures. It will go its own destructive way and no human being can stay its course.